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ABSTRACT

This article is based on the premise that any preservice education program for secondary reading teachers is a must today in the field of teacher education. If everyone is to be able to read in the 70's, teachers must become more innovative and responsible as they develop the skills and attitudes for change within the schools of the times. Flexibility, creativity, and resourcefulness must be part of each teacher's makeup. The solutions to problems in the schools lie in a close examination of the complex nature of the reading process, reflecting an interdisciplinary approach and including an analysis of materials and methods useful for diagnostic and immediate followup activities. A description of a preservice education model for secondary reading teachers is divided into three areas: How does a reading teacher help secondary teachers understand what reading is all about? How does the reading teacher help his teachers know about the different abilities of students? And what methods and materials can be used by secondary school teachers to provide for the many differences in their classes? References are included. (NH)

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SESSION: PRESERVICE EDUCATION

Topic: "A Model for Preservice Education of Secondary Reading Teachers"

Any preservice education program for secondary reading teachers is a must today in the field of teacher education. As more and more problems reveal themselves in our schools, more teachers are being involved in searching for meaningful ways of reaching practical solutions. These solutions lie in a close examination of the complex nature of the reading process, reflecting an interdisciplinary approach, and including an analysis of materials and methods, useful for diagnostic and immediate follow-up activities.

Let's begin by looking at some of the philosophical principles which a secondary reading teacher needs to be concerned with:

1. How does a reading teacher help secondary teachers understand what "reading" is all about?

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It is important to stress that reading is not a separate subject. Each content teacher needs to be involved in the reading program. Each discipline makes certain demands upon the student, and the content teachers need to know exactly what skills are involved in teaching/learning/reading/understanding their respective subjects. As skills are needed, the teacher needs to be certain that his students know the skills, have mastered them, can apply them, in carrying out the assignments. As a skill is taught, adequate time should be given for practice and application. Each student needs to demonstrate his proficiency with that skill before going on to something new. Such skills include vocabulary power, word attack skills, comprehension skills---getting the main idea, recalling details, following directions, remembering the specific sequence, etc., special study skills---outlining, note-taking, reading maps, graphs, charts, tables, pictures, diagrams, etc.

Reading is more than the mastery and application of skills. Secondary teachers expect students to be able to think critically about what has been read. The reading teacher should help secondary teachers understand what is involved in getting students to interpret what they have read. Certain subjects require students to come to conclusions for themselves, to test hypotheses, to know facts from opinions, to weigh judgments, etc. Teachers need to understand that such activities are influenced by experiences students have had within and without the classroom, the effects of mass

media, home learnings, etc., and a student needs time to sift through his reading and experiences to gain clearer understandings for such complex thinking processes growing out of the reading process.

Secondary teachers should be shown the various kinds of language experiences a high school student goes through from subject to subject in a given day. Different sentence patterns affect the ways students comprehend. Certain content fields, such as literature and social studies, are filled with words and ideas appealing to a student's emotions; other content areas, such as mathematics and science, are filled with facts and specific details which demand a different kind of response. Students need help in making the many adaptations to the various subjects and in getting used to the special language and sentence structure used in the texts and "professional journals and books" of each discipline.

Teachers are coming to realize that reading is an active and creative process. Work book assignments do not always bring out the real involvement students feel in their reading activities. Reading is so personal that one has to be careful to allow a student to reveal, perhaps each in his own different way, what impact reading is making upon him. Through discussions, creative writing assignments, dramatics, art and music projects, etc. students can show what they have learned. This will reveal more than any standardized test score.

A good reading program allows plenty of time for self-selection, for the development of independence in and through reading. A good librarian

can help reading teachers communicate to other teachers what new books and other media are available for students to use in carrying out their assignments. The library is the core of any secondary reading program which really attempts to provide for the individual differences of students. As students read at different levels of ability, they need sources with which they can succeed. No one text book, nor one single reading drill activity, is going to compensate for all of the reading needs of students at any grade level in any school. Biology teachers need to know that the library possesses all kinds of reading materials for students; American history teachers and English teachers should be shown the wide range of materials available for carrying out purposeful assignments built upon student interests and abilities.

2. This brings us to another significant point: How does the reading teacher help his teachers know about the different abilities of students?

Diagnosis is more than the collection of standardized test scores. Most reading tests designed for secondary school students do not measure in depth the reading skills needed in each discipline. In fact, informal reading inventories built in each subject area would be much more helpful in pin-pointing specific skill weaknesses and strengths as required by that content teacher.

But teachers need to know that these are transient and mobile times. When one talks about students, is he talking about "yippies," "Hippies," inner-city youth, suburbanities, rural youth, Appalachian youth, reds,

whites, blacks, yellows, reluctant or retarded youth, gifted youth, creative youth, etc.? Such information explains, at times, the reasons why students have difficulty in reading. Their experiential backgrounds might not have provided real roots for understanding special assignments. Students might not have sufficient interest or motivation.

Other factors affecting how a student might perform might be due to physical problems: hearing, speech, vision, motor coordination, etc. Psychological and emotional problems might be involved in a child's developmental process. Students might not have confidence in expressing themselves, and their language development might be impaired. Intelligence factors might be an obstacle. Perceptual problems might be hindering performance.

The good reading teacher helps other teachers understand the complex nature of reading diagnosis, and suggests certain techniques which every teacher might use to gain a better understanding of his students. The wise use of interviews, personal essays, reading autobiographies, as well as informal reading tests, can reveal much about students which a teacher can build upon for more effective instruction. Interest inventories will be most helpful in finding good materials for each student.

Diagnosis is the basis for a series of meaningful grouping activities that will allow each teacher to perform more effectively. Skill groups, project groups, interest groups free the student to work to his maximum potential and to develop according to his needs.

If it is possible, a practicum experience should be built into the preservice education experiences of every secondary school teacher so he can apply his knowledge of diagnostic techniques and work with students. At Jersey City State College, secondary education majors take a reading course in their junior or senior year, and as part of this course, they spend two periods a week helping a freshman or high school student to improve in reading and study needs. The upper classmen work on a one-to-one basis with a student, and in this manner get the opportunity to understand how complex the teaching/learning process really is. Other class time is spent in discussing the problems which crop up as a result of these laboratory experiences. The instructor helps the students plan meaningful instructional assignments to go along with the academic assignments the lower classmen are required to complete. Reading is not taught as an isolated subject. When the high school or freshmen students can see immediate rewards in their assignments as a result of their special efforts, they return for additional help and feel motivated to learn and apply their new skills. The upper classmen soon realize that there is no one cure-all for the problems presented in their laboratory experiences.

3. The next major point is: What methods and materials can be used by secondary school teachers to provide for the many differences in their classes?

This writer has come to stress more of a need for "unit" teaching.

Topic: MAN AND WAR.

Objectives: What causes war? What are the effects of war on the individual, his family, his community, his nation, the world? Who are some famous military leaders? What were some famous events as an outgrowth of war? What is the front line really like?

Materials: Hundreds of paperbacks, magazines, newspapers, films, film strips, recordings, resource speakers, etc., are available. Writers such as Bruce Catton, Ernest Hemingway, Ernie Pyle, John Dos Passos, John Hersey, Bernard Fell, Ann Frank, Eric Remarque, Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower, General Patton, etc., provide a wide range of reading materials and resources, as well as points of view, about each of the topics listed above. Each student can be guided into a book with which he can succeed and through which he can find answers to one of the problems listed above. As he reads for his study question, he writes his report, and he is shown how to take notes and to plan for an oral presentation through which he will share his information. Each student will be held responsible for getting information through reading, writing, speaking, seeing, listening.

Many movies and television programs can be used to present additional basic information. This is a multi-media world, and one learns from all kinds of experiences. Multi-media can aid in the development of reading by providing visual presentations needed for basic language and conceptual development.

Through such teaching activities, many disciplines can be interwoven. Science teachers, social studies teachers, English teachers, home economics teachers, mathematics teachers, agriculture and industrial arts teachers, business education teachers can all see how their subjects are affected by war and the understanding of war. Each discipline can work cooperatively in planning a unit, and several teachers might even use one book and show how the specific disciplines view that one printed source for basic information. By cutting the reading pressure on a poor reader, more time is provided for developing basic skills needed for success in reading. At Central High School in Newark, several eleventh grade history and English teachers have worked out common inter-disciplinary units for their students around such themes as: American Politics, Human Exploration, The Black Experience, America: The Melting Pot, etc. Many books and multimedia are used with these students.

Evaluation takes place by measuring the growth in understanding the objectives listed above. Students have learned new skills and have had to apply them. Each student has kept a complete list of his readings, so that the quality and quantity of materials read can be reviewed. Each student has turned in a written report and has made an oral report. A teacher's daily observations can reveal much about a student's performance in carrying out his assignments, his attitudes, his interests, his degree of resourcefulness, his cooperativeness, his dependability, etc.

A successful reading program in the secondary school is the responsibility of many teachers working cooperatively through their different

subjects in developing materials and methods for helping each student to learn. There is no justification for a single text book when so many reading levels are apparent. There is no one single method, one kit, one machine, that can do or that must do what needs to be done in order to reach each child in the secondary schools throughout our nation. Now is the time for flexibility, creativity, resourcefulness on the part of every teacher. If Commissioner Allen's dream is to be fulfilled, that everyone will read in the 70's, then teachers will need to become more innovative and responsible as they develop the skills and attitudes for change within the schools of these times.

The challenge is here. The resources are available. Let us try new models for those which have been only semi-successful.

Let us provide for all students now!

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